

“From Slavery to Grace” (Exodus 10:1-2)

We are on the four-week series of “Freedom from slavery,” studying the book of Exodus. Today is the second week of the series. And the title is “From slavery to grace.”

1. God hardened Pharaoh’s heart

Exodus 6:5-6

Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. ⁶ "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.

God promised Moses that He would free Israel from the slavery in Egypt. And God sent Moses to Pharaoh. But, no ruler would release his slaves so easily. Pharaoh wouldn’t listen to Moses. Instead of releasing Israel, Pharaoh made their labor harder. We have studied that part last week.

God commanded Moses to go to Pharaoh again and again. And each time he went to Pharaoh, God’s miraculous sign and wonder happened. Aaron’s staff became a snake. The water of the Nile was changed into blood. Frogs covered the whole land of Egypt. Gnats infested the entire land, covering the Egyptians and their animals. And then there were terrible swarms of flies and the whole country was thrown into chaos. Then a deadly plague destroyed the livestock of Egypt. Festering boils broke out on every one throughout Egypt. The worst hailstorm struck everything in the field. Swarms of locusts came up and devoured every tree in the field. Total darkness covered all Egypt for three days.

But after all these terrible incidents, Pharaoh still wouldn’t let people of Israel go. Put yourselves in Moses shoes. You heard God’s promise, did God’s commands, and God performed miraculous signs and wonders. Nevertheless, Pharaoh still wouldn’t let people of Israel go. While the trouble is happening, Pharaoh says he will let them go, but when the trouble has passed, he always refuses to let them go.

What is going on here?

10:1-2

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them ² that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the Lord."

God hardened Pharaoh's heart on purpose. That's why Moses faced the challenge. God was doing that, in order to release His people from the yoke of slavery. In other words, this is the process of being released from the slave mentality. This is the path to come to totally understand who is their Lord.

We may also face the same kind of situation. Why do hardships and problems happen to me? Why doesn't the situation get any better, but does it get harder and harder? Why does it look as if God was not doing anything?

One of the answers is that through the challenge, we would get to know God, we would come to understand who is my Lord. Those trials are there so that you would get to know God, and start living in a closer relationship with God as your Lord. In other words, through trials, I come to know that I have been depending on my strength and trying to live my own way. Strictly speaking, my lord was me.

2 Cor 1:8-9

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. ⁹ Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.

Until we face trials we don't realize or even think what we are really depending on. It is easy to say, "I believe in God. Jesus is my Lord" when everything goes well. But when we face trials, we will know what we are truly relying on. It will become clear whether I am depending on my own strength and trying to live my own way or I am trusting God, submitting myself to him, and living in his grace.

When we live in God's grace, we will walk with God. He is my shepherd and I'm his sheep like Psalm 23 shows. We know God is there with us whatever the circumstance is. Even when we can't get the result as we expected, we will continue to have a hope and trust in God because we know God is in control of all that is happening. When we face something that is beyond our control, we will look forward to even greater power of God.

If we don't know we are in the state of slavery, bounding by the law, we won't hope to be set free from there. If we don't know that we are relying on our own strength, trying to live our own way, and if we don't realize that is not living by faith, we won't seek to be transformed.

God hardened Pharaoh's heart on purpose. So, Moses and people of Israel had to face the challenges. God did that, in order to release His people from the yoke of slavery. That is the training for them to learn that their Lord is God.

2. Pharaoh demanded Moses to compromise

Now I have a question. Did Pharaoh prohibit Israel from worshipping their Holy God completely?

8:25

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God here in the land."

Pharaoh did not prohibit Israel from worshipping their Holy God completely. He said Israel could worship their God in the land of Egypt. He is saying, "If you want to worship the God you believe, you can, but just don't go out of Egypt." Some people might think, "If we can worship God, that will be fine." Is that true?

While they accept what Pharaoh orders them, they are still slaves of Pharaoh, no matter what they do. They are still bound by the authority of Pharaoh. There is no freedom.

Freedom and compromise are incompatible with each other. Compromise, in other words, they don't refuse to listen to Pharaoh. People of Israel cannot be free people, while listening to Pharaoh's command. If they

listen to Pharaoh's command, they are still his slaves. Unless they reject Pharaoh's command, there is no true freedom.

In Chapter 8, 9 and 10, we can see that Pharaoh demanded Moses to compromise. Let's see how Pharaoh negotiates with Moses to make Israel compromise.

Cp.8: An external form of religion

8:28

Pharaoh said, "I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the Lord your God in the desert, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me."

Pharaoh is acting as their king and ruler. He ordered Moses to offer sacrifices to his God. When their Lord is Pharaoh, not God, their worship is only a form of religion, and has no substance.

In the same way, the law never tells us to stop worshipping God. More precise, the law tells us to do religious activities as our duty. "You must always attend Sunday services. You must read the Bible every day. You must pray. You must give offering. You must serve. If you don't follow my order, you will be punished." You are doing those kind of things as your duty in order that you'll be fine.

When we listen to the law, our relationship with God will become a form of religion, there is no life, no substance. The more we listen to the law, the more we feel, "I must do this, and I must do that too. I should have done this or that. I should do more. If I don't, I'll be punished." If we feel that way, we are still slaves of the law.

Cp.9: Refusal to repent

9:27-28

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. "This time I have sinned," he said to them. "The Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. ²⁸ Pray to the Lord, for we have had enough thunder and hail. I will let you go; you don't have to stay any longer."

Pharaoh admitted his sin and confessed it. He agreed and declared that the Lord is right. He is asking Moses to pray for him that the Lord's disaster will go away. He agrees that Israel would worship the Lord.

Is there anything wrong here?

Basically he didn't repent. The reason why he is saying that is, he doesn't want to have trouble any more. He just wanted to get away from troubles. For him, it doesn't matter who God is, who the Lord is.

He refused to repent and asked Moses to help him from the consequence of rejecting God. He is asking Moses compromise.

The main point of repentance is to turn to God, accept him as "my" Lord. We admit that we are totally bankrupted, there is no way to be saved, and submit ourselves to God' grace.

Eph 2:8-9

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith --and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

A man cannot be saved by his works, no matter what he does or no matter how much good works he does. No matter how much we compensate for our sins, or no matter what kind of religious rituals we do, we cannot save ourselves by our work.

But the law leads us to live by work, instead of living by faith in Christ.

Gal 5:4

You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

No matter what good works he does, a person who are trying to be justified by law is still a slave of the law.

Cp.10: Limiting God's Lordship

10:24

Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, "Go, worship the Lord. Even your women and children may go with you; only leave your flocks and herds behind."

Even if Moses follows the voice of Pharaoh, he can still do something for God. He can still offer sacrifices to the Lord. He can go and worship the Lord with his whole family, including children. But Pharaoh is still his master. He is under Pharaoh's lordship as long as he is listening to him.

And we can have only one master.

Matthew 6:24

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

The voice of Pharaoh will give Moses an illusion that as long as he surrenders part of his life, that will be all right. But that is not true. No one can serve two masters.

God hardened Pharaoh's heart on purpose. So, Moses had to come back to God and listen to him and follow him again and again. This was the path through which Moses understood totally God is his Lord. This was the training for them to learn that their Lord is God.

3. Freedom from the law

How can we be free from the law?

(1) Die to the law

Romans 7:1-4

Do you not know, brothers--for I am speaking to men who know the law--that the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? ² For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. ³ So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. ⁴ So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.

Here, using the illustration from marriage, the relationship between a Christian and the law is explained.

A man has a marriage relationship with the law by birth. This marriage relationship will continue until either a husband or a wife dies. As the law never dies, the marriage relationship with the law never end.

God brought death in order to save man from the relationship with the law. That is, God made a man to die, not the law. A man was crucified with Christ Jesus, and died. When the man died, his marriage relationship with the law finished.

Rom 7:6

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.

And the person who died with Christ Jesus was raised with Him, and will live new life with a new husband, who is Jesus. That is a Christian. And his new life is led by the Holy Spirit who lives in him.

(2) The Holy Spirit puts to death our sinful nature

Here there is another problem. Many Christians try to die by themselves. They try to kill their old self by themselves. They try to put themselves to the cross. That is, they try to live new marriage relationship with Jesus by the old way, by the law, by our own work. How do I know it? Because I did it.

For example, I tried to stop having fun, what I enjoyed, and instead, I tried to read the Bible, pray and serve in church. I push myself to do those things in order to make me look like a good Christian. For a couple of days, I was okay. But after a week or so, I got tired. After a month, I backslide and went back to the original state. Now I become a zombie Christian. I'm supposed to be dead and buried, but actually still alive. I attack people around me, with missiles of judgment and criticism, and beam of pride and jealousy. And zombie Christians are multiplied.

Why does this happen? What is the cause? What is the problem? That is because I tried to kill myself by myself. I tried to act like a Christian by my own work. I was the slave of the law.

Romans 8:13-14

... if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, ¹⁴ because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

The Bible says it very clearly, “If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. “

The freedom from the law is by the power of God, by the work of the Holy Spirit. It is God’s grace. I don’t deserve it. None of us deserve it. We receive it only by faith in Christ.

(3) Led by the Holy Spirit

After we were freed from the slavery of the law, we live by following the Spirit, not by observing the law.

Our actions of observing the law look good. They have a good appearance because we are doing them by ourselves. We have a sense of satisfaction that we have done this or that. By legalism, we can keep up appearance before people. But it has no power to conquer sin.

You may wonder, “If a man is not observing the law, is he not prone to sinful acts?”

A good question. Let me clarify. When a man was saved, Jesus started to live in him. He has the mind of Jesus (1 Cor 2:16). He who has the mind of Christ cannot live in sin. Although he may make mistakes, yet he will naturally avoid evil. When he has committed a sin, he feels terrible, because he hates sin.

Gal 5:16

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Christians who have been freed from the slavery of the law live and do things, for they love Jesus and love others. Not out of a sense of duty, not out of fear but for love, they will naturally wish to do good things.

It is just like parents who protect and take care of children. Just like a husband who takes good care of his wife, and a wife who takes care of her husband. They don’t do it, because they have to do it. They don’t do it, because certain books instruct them to do so. They want to do it, because they love their

children, wife and husband. God gives them love, and the love moves them and gives them courage.

God is leading us through the journey of freedom from slavery to grace.

A slave of the law confronts with a list of what he should do and will try to accomplish it by his own ability. But, the list will never end. Christians who live in grace will naturally show Jesus' character through their life because they love Jesus and love people. God's power, His work and His glory is there with them.

There are trials and challenges. But it's okay, because God is with us. He is my shepherd and I'm his sheep. And we may recognize what we have been bound by. And we will experience the freedom from slavery to grace.

For Lifenet groups and personal reflection

1) Each time Moses went to Pharaoh, God's miraculous sign and wonder happened. But Pharaoh still didn't let Israel go. If you were Moses, what would you think?

2) Read Exodus 10:1-2 and 2 Cor 1:8-9. Have you ever had an experience where through a trial or hardship you recognized that you actually relied on yourself, and not on God? Have you had any experiences in which through a challenge you came closer to God, or a Godly character was formed in you?

3) Three ways of compromise are introduced: An external form of religion, Refusal to repent, and Limiting God's Lordship. Have you seen any of them in your life? How did they come about? And, which one is the most difficult one for you to recognize? And which one is the most difficult one for you to renounce?

4) Read Psalm 23. How does this psalm describe about the life of "the Lord is my shepherd"? What would his life be like if he didn't have the shepherd?